



STEVEN PARRINO *GRAPHIC WORK (1989-2004)*

18.02.2022 – 30.04.2022

Steven Parrino (New York, 1958–2005) spoke of “Approaching history in the same way that Dr. Frankenstein approaches body parts... Nature Morte...” He is well known for the abstract paintings he started making in the 1980s. His work, produced during a career that was terminated by a mortal motorbike accident in 2005, has been seen in important solo shows at the Musée d’Art Moderne et Contemporain – MAMCO, in Geneva (2006), at the Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2007), and, more recently, at the Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein (2020). His graphic work holds the keys to his singular relation to the image. Amidst all the rhetoric about the death of painting, Parrino revisited the modern monochrome, testing it, unpinning it, crumpling it and tearing it.

The drawings exhibited here embrace a variety of cultural references from art history, which they confront with underground figures: Land Art, the group Black Flag, comics and B-movies. The flat monochrome is associated with death, the black flag, moiré, Inca crosses and abstract expressionism. These compositions of references were made by an artist marked by the end of modern narratives and the hypermediation of the world. Freshly graduated from Parsons School of Design, Parrino took part in the inaugural exhibition of Nature Morte, the artists’ space where he worked alongside Peter Nagy, Alan Belcher and Joel Otterson, three figures from the appropriationist movement. Nature Morte was associated with the touring show “Infotainment” (1985), which brought together not only those artists but members of the Pictures Generation (Sarah Charlesworth) and a few Neo Geo artists (Peter Halley). This was a generation who, following on from Andy Warhol, believed in the need to interrogate the media image and the way it conditions our relation to reality.

In 2003 Parrino borrowed Warhol’s exhibition title “Death in America.” But where Warhol’s 1963 show featured a mishmash of press photos of car crashes, food poisoning and electric chairs, Parrino presented a series of crumpled canvases silvered like the silver balloons, oscillating between the charm of drapery and the horror of a crumpled car body. He was

particularly drawn to Warhol's "Death and Disaster" series. With the obscene repetition of motifs such as a mortal car crash or a demonstrator molested by a dog, Warhol broke with the glamour industry to explore the images of horror in America. It is also in these series that we find diptychs juxtaposing and playing off the tension between a repeated image and a monochrome. If Parrino favoured tracing paper, it was because he liked the coldness, that of the epidermis and that of the transfer technique this paper enables. In a Warholian manner, he confronts cold monochrome with the reproduction of images. Parrino's abstract paintings and drawings are silent, like censor, but his brutal iconoclasm is indexed on the violence of a hyper-media-driven society.

Julien Fronsacq, Geneva, January 2022

Thanks to The Parrino Family Estate, Gagosian gallery, as well as the lenders.

Image : Steven Parrino, *Untitled*, 2003 © Steven Parrino. The Parrino Family Estate.
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Other Steven Parrino exhibitions:

"Steven Parrino", solo exhibition, Gagosian gallery, Basel, Switzerland, from 3 February to 19 March 2022; "La couleur en fugue", group show, Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris, from 27 April to 28 August 2022.

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Gallery opening hours: Tue–Sat, 11am–7pm and by appointment